

NIH PMAP FAQs

- 1) Q. Who developed this new policy and why is it being implemented now?

A. An HHS Steering Committee with representation from all the OPDIVS drafted the new performance management system. The plan represents final decisions made by the Office of the Secretary and the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). The HHS PMAP is being implemented now as the federal workforce is moving toward performance programs that make clear performance distinctions, e.g., multi-level rating programs, and that link performance to awards. The performance distinctions envisioned by the U.S. OPM and Office of Management and Budget are not possible under the current pass/fail programs.

- 2) Q. What training is required by NIH staff?

A. The web-based performance management training developed by the Office of the Secretary, DHHS. There are two training modules, one for supervisors and managers and one for employees. Training should be completed as early as possible after it becomes available and prior to November 1, 2006.

- 3) Q. Will the individual outcomes need to be developed at each of the four rating levels?

A. No, the performance objectives included under each Critical Element must describe the performance expectations at the Fully Successful level only. Performance expectations may be described at the Exceptional level if so desired. The four possible standards (performance levels) used to assess performance accomplishments for each critical element are defined on the performance appraisal form.

- 4) Q. Is it true that employees rated Exceptional need not be paid the same percentage amount, just somewhere in the 2.5% - 5% range? Is it also true that employees rated Fully Successful may not receive any performance award, while others could, subject to the 2% maximum?

A. Both questions are correct. While the PMAP provides that employees who are rated Exceptional will receive performance awards; performance awards are optional for employees who are rated Fully Successful. ICs will need to strategize how they will implement performance awards within their own ICs to ensure a consistent and fair approach within their organizations.

- 5) Q. What steps should be taken when an employee receives a Minimally Successful rating on one element? What are the supervisor's responsibilities and the employee's responsibilities?
- A. The supervisor should work closely with the employee to improve performance in the area(s) that need improvement. The Office of Human Resources Employee Relations Team can guide managers through this process. When the overall rating is Minimally Successful, the Within Grade Increase (WIGI) will be denied until performance improves to at least the Fully Successful level. Managers are encouraged to be proactive and contact the Employee Relations Team as soon as a potential problem is identified. The Employee Relations Team contact(s) for each IC can be found at <http://hr.od.nih.gov/ER/Default.htm>. In addition, employees should maintain communication with supervisors in an on-going fashion to ensure that any potential problems can be addressed at the earliest stages.
- 6) Q. If you rate an employee as Exceptional, could you give them less than the recommended 2.5% of their base salary or would you have to lower their rating to Fully Successful?
- A. It is the intent of HHS PMAP that all employees rated Exceptional receive at least 2.5%, funds permitting. If funds are not available, then payment less than 2.5% is possible.
- 7) Q. Is the intent that an employee rated Exceptional may receive either a QSI or a cash award, in the PMAP?
- A. That is correct. Employees may receive one or the other, but not both, for the same rating period.
- 8) Q. What is the relationship between monetary performance awards and time-off awards? For example, if an employee is approved for a \$5,000 performance award, may the employee receive a time-off award worth \$3,000, plus the \$2,000 difference in value?
- A. The PMAP policy provides that an employee who is receiving a cash performance award may request to convert the cash award into an equivalent time-off award, not to exceed an aggregate calendar year total of 40 hours time-off. (Note that it is the employee, not the manager, who would request to convert a performance award into an equivalent time-off award.) In the example above, the employee receiving the \$5,000 performance award may request to convert the cash award into 40 hours time-off. If the dollar value of the time-off award for

this employee is \$3,000; then, yes, the employee is to be paid the remaining \$2,000 of the award.

To determine the dollar value of time-off, multiple the employee's hourly rate by the number of time-off hours.

**Example**

An GS 14, step 4, earning \$100,457 per annum (locality pay included), or \$48.13 per hour, is rated Exceptional and has been approved to receive a 2.5% performance award. Based on the employee's salary, the 2.5 % award is \$2,511.43. The employee requests 40 hours of time-off. To determine the value of the cash award amount into time-off equivalency, you need to multiply the employee's hourly rate by the 40 hours time off requested.

- $\$48.13 \times 40 \text{ hours} = \$1,925.20$ .
- Subtract the time off award amount from the cash award amount.
- $\$2,511.43 - \$1,925.20 = \$586.23$ .
- The employee would receive a cash award in the amount of \$586.23 in addition to 40 hours in a time-off award.

- 9) Q. Will the Government-wide January pay increases still be available in the PMAP?
- A. Yes, the across-the-board pay increases approved by the President will still be available.
- 10) Q. Is it possible to change a plan that has already been established?
- A. Yes, the PMAP affords this flexibility. Managers and employees may decide to pen-and-ink minor changes to existing plans when this seems appropriate. Substantial changes that indicate the need for new critical elements may be made as well. Managers and employees can assess the adequacy of plans mid-point during this rating cycle, which would be about October.
- 11) Q. Are supervisors required to draft supporting narratives for employees who are receiving Exceptional summary ratings on plans?
- A. While the HHS PMAP only requires supervisory narratives for ratings below Fully Successful, the NIH has decided on a policy requiring supervisors to provide narratives to support all Exceptional ratings and for Fully Successful ratings where any type of performance award is approved. Supervisors may use the same narrative justification required for the Exceptional or Fully Successful summary rating as the justification for the resultant performance award.